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INTRODUCTION

Rethinking Colonial Korea

Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson

Until the past decade, the national politics of division and the international politics of the Cold War have directly or indirectly constricted our understanding of modern Korean history. With liberation from colonial rule in 1945 and the emergence of two competing Korean states, history itself became part of the competition between the two Korean states. As a by-product of political competition, history fell hostage to the truth claims of two very different political systems. Abroad, the polarized politics of the Cold War also influenced historical writing on Korea. Thus, even in societies in which historians were not subject to political pressures, the story more often than not was imbedded in a frame of reference that supported or denied the generalized truth claims of political regimes in the bipolar world order.

This situation is not unique. History is precisely the site of contention and conflict over the meaning and significance of the past. When different narratives are free to compete, a general consensus often emerges only to be challenged anew in a process of continual revision. In the case of the two Koreas, however, the struggle over the past has been particularly difficult. Much of the difficulty arises from the particular connection between history and the politics of nationalism. Different versions of history can naturalize highly diverse contemporary political and social arrangements. Yet, until recently the logic of nationalism as it has informed the writing of modern Korean history assumes there

can be only one legitimate outcome of national becoming. The binary logic of true nation / anti-nation restricts historical inquiry. The emergence of two competing Korean states in 1948 created an artificial break in the historical record. Rather than fearlessly probe the historical record of the pre-1945 Korean experience, nationalist histories of the North and South cast their gaze backward with tunnel vision in order to create a story that most coherently signified the telos of the separate political/social systems.

With the end of the Cold War and the transformation of domestic politics on the Korean peninsula, there has been a renaissance in historical research on the Korean colonial period. This volume was created to encourage this trend toward the reshaping of our understanding of colonial history, one that challenges the unitary focus, artificial unity, and binary-producing tendencies of older assumptions about nationalism that have too often dominated Korean historiography. The goal is not, however, to deny the important contribution that nationalist scholarship has made in effectively refuting colonialist interpretations of Korean history, nor is the purpose to reject nationalism as a variable of analysis. We do not intend to create a new historical paradigm or claim these studies as exemplars of a "correct" view of Korean history. Rather, we wish to offer a wealth of new questions and tentative answers to issues that have been obscured by the relentless politicization of the historical record that emerged after the division in 1945. In short, our collective purpose is to see how writing around, beneath, and beyond the nationalist approaches so prominent in Korean history writing can enhance our understanding of the Korean colonial period.

By understanding nationalism as a fluid, constructed, and changeable category that is neither predetermined nor fixed on a unitary pathway of development, we are able to ask different questions of the period of colonial rule. We are not interested in the historical legitimation project of either Korean state—although we are mindful that we are helpless to prevent the appropriation of this work by those who fashion such narratives. By placing these studies within a self-consciously different frame—one that emphasizes dynamism, multiple possibilities and causal connections, and various (often competing) contemporary ideas of nation, modernity, and colonialism—we hope to stimulate the process of historical rediscovery already under way within the field of modern Korean studies in the West as well as Korea.

Nationalist Historical Narratives and Korea's Twentieth Century

The nationalist paradigm has dominated the historical presentation of modern Korea. It presupposes an unproblematic sense of the Korean nation, a nation that is assumed to have existed in a "natural" form in the premodern era and emerged in the late nineteenth century coeval with the modern stimuli of external political pressures, especially Japanese aggression. The process of rethinking Korean politics and culture in national form accelerated with the failure of the ancien régime's reforms and inability to defend its sovereignty. With formal colonization in 1910 by the Japanese, nascent Korean nationalism flowered in different directions—as cultural, political, and social revolutionary impulses—all focused on a reshaping of Korean society and consciousness in order to create an independent nation-state.

Early twentieth-century Western accounts of Korea either accepted the social Darwinian judgments manifest in traditional Korea's fall in the face of superior Japanese/Western political and social evolution or championed the right of the assumed Korean nation to exist. Concurrently, Korean nationalist historians constructed a nation from the repository of traditional historical narratives and cultural memories in order to have the Korean people think their way toward a new collective identity. After 1910, Japanese colonialist historians countered with elaborate justifications for seeing Korea as a part of Japan in order to legitimate Japanese political, economic, and cultural domination. Both the Korean and the Japanese narratives produced a prodigious amount of information and presented Korea, in effect, to the gaze of the global community. In their fidelity to dominating causal theories, however, they also began an equally powerful process of obfuscation. Such thinking imposed on Korean history a system of binaries that produced an exceedingly limiting historical narrative: failed tradition in the face of modernity, backwardness overcome by progress, righteous national pride obscured by evil external domination, collaboration of the rich (Korean and Japanese/Western monopoly capitalists) over the pure, impoverished (Korean) masses, Japan-Korea, Asia-the West, and so forth. The resulting verbiage created a mound of information about Korea: events, people, ideas, movements, social and economic development, and atrocities. However, the causal connecting of this cornu-

copia of facts remained limited by its own rationalist and bifurcating logic – the logic of linear development that undergirds modern History, itself a product of the telos of advanced, Western nation-states.¹

Post-1945 histories of Korea's past century added more facts to the pile while further blurring causes and connections that might better illumine the full experience of humanity on the peninsula. Three powerful master narratives, like broadcast-jamming beacons, emanate from the two postwar Korean states and, to a lesser extent, linger within the political overtones of Cold War politics. Both Korean states have a powerful interest in history – their stories support their claims to legitimacy. They have woven a version of its ancient and modern memory into master narratives that justify their respective claims to be the true representative of the nation in the world community. In both cases, the state has used considerable force to repress counter-narratives. Each polices the writing of history and shapes public opinion around a general common understanding of why its system should be recognized as the true expression of Korean collective identity. A third master narrative, that of the Cold War, compounds the competition between the national stories of North and South Korea. Essentially this is a narrative created by the United States that fits the problematic of the Korean peninsula into its own concept of the post-World War II era – a story that legitimates the American struggle against global communism. These politicized narratives constrict understanding by aligning historical inquiry to the present imperatives of national and international politics.² The problems this poses for Korean historians in the North and, until recently, the South are obvious. Western historians have fared little better; they have often found themselves taking sides, making moral judgments, or writing between these narratives, only vaguely aware of the dominating logic that constricts their own narratives.

This volume seeks to escape from such politicized master narratives by examining colonial history from more inclusive, pluralist approaches. In recent years, a number of scholars in both Korea and the West have begun to challenge the simplistic binary of colonial repression/exploitation versus Korean resistance by attending to the interworkings of colonialism and modernity as well as to multiple representations of the national community.³ This volume aspires to stimulate this new trend of historical scholarship with a focus on the complex relations among colonialism, modernity, and nationalism. The essays presented here were written by Korean and non-Korean authors representing a number of different academic disciplines. Despite these dif-

ferences, however, we share an interest in a group of questions, and our work grows out of certain assumptions.

An Interactive Approach to Colonial History

Our inquiries are conceptually grounded within a triangular field bounded by three interlocking and mutually influencing ideas: colonialism, modernity, and nationalism (see Fig. 1).⁴ This spatial metaphor allows us greater flexibility to pursue what might be called an ecological handling of historical traces. Rather than artificially draining the flood of historical experience through channels in linear fashion—forcing the flow of events through straight canals of modernization, the rise of nationalism, or colonial repression / national resistance—it might be better to reclaim the land with a mind to restoring some of the density, richness, and complexity of the original ecosystem. Such an idea is in line with the conviction that turn-of-the-century nationalism was not a pent-up reservoir of pre-existing Koreanness ready to flow along the deep new channel provided by imported concepts of the nation-state; nor was Korea's experience of modernity bound to course inexorably within existing channels of Western or Japanese construction. Moreover, Japanese colonial domination (hegemony) must be considered a unique phenomenon; it resembled other colonialisms, yet its construction and evolution in Korea provided multiple stimuli for other processes. Colonial evolution was dynamic: it had to adapt to the responses of Korean society and, in doing so, reflected this experience back into the construction of Japanese identity and modernity.

Colonialism, modernity, and nationalism mark the borders of our field of inquiry. Each carries its own unique cluster of concepts while holding within its individual frame important constituents of the other two. By seeing them as mutually reinforcing frames, we can deepen our current understanding of colonial history, which is based largely on binary constructions: imperialist repression versus national resistance, colonial exploitation versus national development, or Japanese culture versus Korean culture. Most of the existing nationalist narratives discussed below posit a disjunction between colonialism and modernity because they assume that colonial rule either destroyed or distorted Korea's effort to modernize. Similarly, nationalism by definition must be counterpoised to colonialism. It rejects any image of political community that is not explicitly anti-colonial. In other words, current nationalist narratives treat colonialism, modernity, and nationalism as

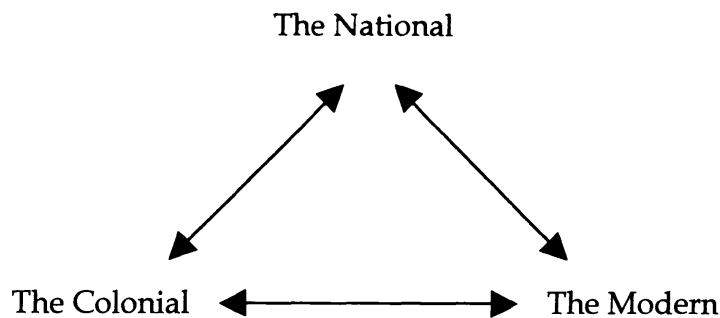


Fig. 1 The historical field

separate and isolated variables without appreciating the multiple possibilities of their interrelationship. Losing the interactive resonance of these ideas diminishes our appreciation of such important and complex issues as colonial modernity, cultural hegemony, and the formation of non-national identities. It is now time to move beyond such dichotomizing conceptions of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism, and we believe this can be done by holding a view in which all three variables interact. The twelve chapters contained in this volume attempt to examine the colonial period accordingly.

Colonialism

The first border of our historical field is colonialism. There have been some attempts to grapple with the unique nature of Japanese colonialism in Korea.⁵ Secondary histories of the colony, however, generally assume a unitary, homogenized view of colonialism. Japanese interests and domination are assumed to be uncomplicated, and there is no sense that the Japanese might have been affected by their experience in Korea or that the lines between resistance and collaboration might have been blurred and permeable throughout the period of Japanese rule. Even more fundamentally, the fact that Japan as a latecomer to the business of imperialism had the advantage of learning from Western colonialism and thus created uniquely effective control strategies is seldom discussed. In economic relations, the colony-metropolitan relationship is seen as a zero-sum game for Korea; like the other colonial powers in their respective dominions, Japan plundered Korea – this in spite of what we know about the uniqueness of Japanese economic policy and the extraordinary infrastructural development in Korea between 1910 and 1945. Soon-Won Park explicitly demonstrates this point in her

analysis of labor class formation and infrastructural development in Chapter 5. In politics, one surmises, after reading most Korean-language treatments of the period, that all good Koreans organized their lives for 40 years around the single issue of resisting Japanese political domination. This is a rather narrow reading of human responses to their environment. The narratives of North and South Korean historiography on colonialism often seem a simple mud-slinging contest; this unitary focus on the memory of colonialism explains, in Bruce Cumings's phrase, "why one Korea indulges in a myth that everyone resisted and the other in a myth that no one collaborated."⁶

We are, therefore, mindful of the disproportionately dominant role Japanese colonial repression plays in historical narratives on Korea. Anti-colonialism and national liberation struggles did play key roles in the Korean pre-1945 experience; excessive emphasis, however, on a uniquely coercive Japanese political repression, economic exploitation, and its debilitating cultural policies has obscured our understanding of more complicated historical processes that emerged in this period. In the Manichean divide between nationalism and colonialism, all anti-Japanese behavior is nationalist; there are no shades of gray. North Korean and leftist historiography is equally myopic, favoring a dichotomy that divides the national liberation struggle between those who fought colonialism and everyone else who collaborated. Such thinking deflects primary historical agency from Korean society to outside forces. We propose to consider Japanese domination within the broader lens of cultural hegemony.

A major feature of modern domination is its pervasiveness in everyday life beyond political/economic realms. The modern nation-state mobilizes not only police and state apparatus but also the "culture industry" to obtain dominance over its subjects. The Foucauldian notion of discourse and the Gramscian conception of hegemony point to the modern nature of domination-subordination relations. Hegemony is essentially a concept that helps to explain how political and civil society, with institutions ranging from education, religion, and family to the microstructures of the practices of everyday life, shapes the meaning and values that produce, direct, and maintain the "spontaneous" consent of the various strata of society to domination. Nationalist narratives neglect the "hegemonic" aspects of Japanese colonialism by focusing exclusively on economic domination and political repression. We argue that such a focus obscures more subtle and complex processes within Korea's experience of colonial domination, particularly in

the *bunka seiji* (Cultural Rule) period after 1920 and before the war mobilization of the late 1930s. It turned out to be, in retrospect, a more effective strategy than naked repression, and it encouraged reformist rather than revolutionary/popular responses within Korean society.⁷

Japan sought to obtain cultural hegemony in Korea with a divide-and-rule strategy developed after the failure of the *budan seiji* (Military Rule) in the first decade of the colonial era. The policy of Cultural Rule co-opted nationalist leaders and channeled popular anti-Japanese sentiments into institutionalized forums. By the end of the 1920s, this strategy had paid dividends, as the nationalist movement waned and as politicized elites and the small urban, literate, middle class were subsumed in a more ambiguous culture of colonial modernity. As Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han point out in Chapter 3, Japanese efforts to obtain hegemonic power also included state-initiated ideological programs, such as the Rural Revitalization Campaign, that emphasized "mental awakening." Although the colonial government initiated the campaign as a corporatist social policy to save rural households (over three-quarters of the population) from poverty, it simultaneously sought "friendly feelings and hearty cooperation between Japanese and Koreans" and "sympathy, harmony, and mutual help between officials and the people."

The "spiritual" (to use the term favored by Japanese officials) nature of the campaign set it in the context of a larger colonial hegemony to obtain what Chulwoo Lee in Chapter 1 calls "domination over the soul." Following the beginning of Japan's war with China in 1937, the colonial government formalized a program to assimilate Korean culture and thought into Japanese forms in its pursuit of "total war." This shift, encapsulated in the well-known slogan *naisen ittai* (Korea and Japan as a single body), brought a number of state initiatives in the cultural, economic, and social arenas together in an intensive indoctrination program of education and participation in the rites and symbolism of Japanese Shintoism and imperial rule. In Chungmoo Choi's words, Japan attempted to "colonize consciousness" by imposing its own worldview, cultural norms, and values on Koreans in the hope that they would adopt an alien system of thought and disparage indigenous culture and identity.⁸ Did Japan's efforts to obtain cultural hegemony succeed?

Despite its significance, the question of Japan's success has not yet been adequately investigated in Korean historiography. The nationalist narrative assumes, rather than proves, that such hegemonic efforts

failed, characterizing any and all social and political resistance during the colonial period as nationalist and anti-colonial. Conversely, others assume that the “colonization of consciousness” indeed occurred. We argue that such polarized views fail to capture the dynamic nature of colonial hegemony. Colonial hegemonic policy, while trying to “colonize” Korean culture and consciousness, provided “space” for groups to reconstruct their own being—some took an oppositional stance, others reformed, still others supported colonial hegemony. Accordingly, we must view colonial hegemony as a historical process continuously negotiated, contested, defended, renewed, re-created, and altered, by challenges from within and without. Proper understanding of any hegemonic process must consider its dialectical relations to counter-hegemonic voices. Although Japanese colonialists promoted the dominant ideology through their schools and mass media, Koreans—aware of earlier social, intellectual, and political forms and in the process of creating their own response to the multiple stimuli of modernity, colonialism, and national politics/identity—contested (though not necessarily as nationalist narratives portray) colonial hegemony. This response was complicated further by the rapid and telescoped change characteristic of the twentieth century—for Korea, this change occurred in the context of “colonial modernity.”

Modernity

In recent years there has been a great deal of discussion and debate over the concept of modernity among scholars in Korea as well as the West.⁹ Terms like “East Asian modernity,”¹⁰ “colonial modernity,”¹¹ “high modernity,”¹² and “postmodernity”¹³ illustrate the diversity and scope of such debates. Modernity is a phenomenon that first appeared in eighteenth-century Western Europe and then spread to other parts of the world. It is frequently associated with the Enlightenment, rationalism, citizenship, individualism, legal-rational legitimacy, industrialism, nationalism, the nation-state, the capitalist world-system, and so on. The industrial revolution of England and the social revolution of France as well as rationalist Enlightenment thought are considered major events that shaped the rise and growth of European modernity. In short, in its origins and nature, modernity is inherently a historical and Western phenomenon.

Although modernity originated in the West, it has taken different forms as it spread to other parts of the world. Contrary to earlier mod-

ernization arguments, which held that societies develop along the line of Western modernity, it has now become clear that there are multiple paths to modernity. Barrington Moore's classic work on diverse paths to modernity – West European bourgeois democracy, German/Japanese fascism, and Russian/Chinese communism – clearly established this idea. In a similar context, scholars of East Asia have posited an "East Asian modernity" distinct from the West European version.¹⁴ Nonetheless, non-European modernity, such as the East Asian version, did not develop in isolation from Western Europe – it was influenced by the model of the Western nation-state and affected by power politics and economic relations in its transmission. In fact, Moore makes it clear that the German/Japanese path or Russian/Chinese path to modernity cannot be conceived without considering the Western European experience: the former were largely a response to the latter.¹⁵ Similarly, Liah Greenfeld's recent work on nationalism shows that the existence of the model of individualistic British nationalism was to a great extent responsible for the rise of collectivist nationalism in Germany.¹⁶ East Asia's form of modernity, while quite distinctive, has similarly been, as Tu Wei-ming points out, the result of a conscious response to the challenge of the modern West.¹⁷

The rise of modernity in Korea was also closely associated with external influences. In particular, it was the emergence of modern Japan and its intrusion into Korea that stimulated and provided a direct model for the effort to build a nation-state in the late nineteenth century. Efforts from above like the Kabo Reform (Kabo kyōngjang, 1894–96) movement or from below such as the Tonghak peasant rebellions (1894) reflected the situation that Korea faced – a twofold task of modernization and the preservation or reconstruction of national identity. Thus, as the processes associated with modernity developed, they were entwined with outside economic and political influence, and ultimately they evolved in a context of colonial domination. Moreover, although the sources of what became modernity in Korea were Western in origin, Korea's reception of modernity was mediated by a complicated filtering mechanism – a process of translation begun a generation earlier in Japan and one that continued in Korea under colonial rule.

Any discussion of Korean modernity, therefore, must confront the fact of colonialism. Some scholars, especially those in Korea, are reluctant to examine modernity in the colonial context. For them, modernity signifies historical progress, and as such it cannot possibly be associated with such retrograde phenomena as colonialism; the latter hinders the

creation of a “true” modernity or at best produces a “distorted” development.¹⁸ In the nationalist perspective, the colonial state as agent of change delegitimizes the “modern” itself. This is a value-laden, essentialist use of the concept, because modernity is neither a universal good nor a historical necessity.¹⁹ This conception of modernity denies Koreans agency in the construction of their own modernity. Colonialism intervened in Korea’s path to modernity, but this did not automatically make Koreans mere passive recipients of modernity. Koreans participated directly and indirectly in the construction of a unique colonial modernity—a modernity that produced cosmopolitanism (a sense of shared universals) without political emancipation. Colonial modernity possessed liberating forces and a raw, transformative power, and it affected the more nuanced forms of domination and repression in the colony. Its sheer complexity must be recognized.

Furthermore, modernity in Korea evolved unevenly across diverse social groups and regions. Colonial modernity meant the loss of vested interests for some social groups, but it provided opportunities for social mobility for others. Moreover, modern technologies and institutions provided multiple possibilities for increased political and cultural oppression or “governmentality” by the colonial state while concretely creating new spaces for political resistance and cultural expression. In Chapter 2, Michael Robinson begins a discussion of the spaces for cultural expression opened by the explosion of consumed forms of leisure. In Chapter 8, Kyeong-Hee Choi examines the issue of new avenues of mobility through education explored by women during the period. In Chapter 11, Joong-Seop Kim analyzes the linkage of the modern idea of equality to the *paekchǒng* liberation movement of the 1920s and 1930s. These studies demonstrate the utility of examining the multiple sites of change characteristic of colonial modernity rather than assuming it to be a general universalizing process. An attention to the diverse effects of modernity enables us to explain how the uneven spread and perception of colonial modernity created a potential for competing versions of political community among diverse social groups *within* the colony.

Japan’s extensive use of modern means of cultural production such as education and media for domination further complicates the effort to understand colonial modernity and hegemony. As the Frankfurt school’s analysis of modernity demonstrates, the increasing rationalization of the process of cultural production can intensify hegemonic efforts. In fact, both modern education and media and their support for a modern popular culture interacted to create, transform, and maintain

colonial hegemony, particularly in the 1930s. The Japanese authorities closely monitored and controlled the news media and school curriculum and also used them to socialize Koreans as good colonial subjects. This served to normalize the colonial status quo. The popular culture's connection to modernity, to new styles of leisure and consumption, indirectly legitimized colonial rule by associating colonial social and political relations with participation in the modern world. Indeed, from the inception of Korean nationalism, internalizing the idea of the nation-state meant counterpoising a "backward" traditional society with aspirations (defined first in Western terms, and later in comparative terms to Japan's modernity) to create a "modern" Korea. The issue of Korean participation in a colonial modernity is finessed in most nationalist histories by isolating the "true" national form of modernity from any connection to "tainted" Japanese modernity. Korea's unique modern experience, however, cannot be broken into discrete Japanese, Western, or Korean parts.

Moreover, the new technology's potential for producing counter-hegemony should not be overlooked. Modernity can both assist and endanger a prevailing hegemony. For example, the emergence of the modern culture industry – print capitalism, the recording industry, radio broadcasts, and cinema – provided Japan with powerful weapons to reinforce colonial hegemony. As Robinson argues, however, these new media also created oppositional spaces within the new popular culture. Allegorical readings of Korean film, imported popular magazines, popular songs, and stand-up comedy on the radio challenged centralized cultural controls in intriguing ways. Similarly, Japanese expansion of modern education to promote assimilation offered social (co-optive) mobility for some, for others it was central in forming a modern Korean nationalist consciousness, and perhaps for many it was of no consequence at all. Indeed, in Chapter 9, Michael Shin points to the fact that even though modern literature emerged in the colonial context, it was vital to the genesis of Koreans' search for national identity. The complex, double-edged nature of modernity suggests the failure of Korean nationalism to overthrow the colonial regime should be understood in part as a result not only of Japanese political repression but also of the *interaction* of inclusive forces within Japanese cultural hegemony. In the end, the fact that Japanese colonialism successfully denied Koreans liberation does not negate the force of nationalism in the colony. Ignoring, however, the complexity of cultural hegemony

obscures the causes that have shaped postcolonial Korean political and cultural development.

Nationalism

The nationalist paradigm reads Korea's recent historical experience as a narrative of emerging national self-consciousness, the resulting struggle for expression against outside forces, and, finally, the achievement of political and cultural independence as a sovereign nation. In lockstep fashion, this reading links modern nationalism to external political and economic intrusion and its maturation into the ultimately "successful" liberation from Japanese colonial rule. The process is assumed to be natural and a revelation of a pre-existing Korean nation.²⁰ In this view, Korean nationalism is always a "progressive" force deployed first against the corrupt ancien régime and later against "repressive" Japanese imperialism. A simplistic Korea-Japan binary overlays all such narratives. To wit, the Japanese repressed nascent Korean modernity in favor of economic exploitation and cultural assimilation. Koreans who were successful in the colonial polity, economy, or society "collaborated" and became non-Koreans, and their constructions of wealth or cultural property are labeled "anti-national." Women's liberation is appropriated as a story of resistance to Japanese oppression. Economic growth, infrastructural development, education, the creation of human capital, and institution building are decontextualized and dismissed as by-products of Japanese exploitation.

These politicized narratives obscure a rich and pluralistic discourse on representation of the political community during the colonial period. Recent scholarship shows that during the period there were a number of alternative narratives of political community that rejected modernity, denied the nation-state form, or pushed beyond traditional peninsular physical boundaries to claim a trans-Yalu territory for Korea. For example, Gi-Wook Shin shows that Korean agrarianists attempted to construct a new Korea based on a "utopian agrarian nation" uncontaminated by Western capitalism, Japanese colonialism, or Marxist ideology.²¹ Andre Schmid and Henry Em reveal a number of alternative readings of the famously ambiguous Korean nationalist historian, Sin Ch'aeho; the struggle in both North and South Korea to appropriate Sin's intellectual legacy in order to legitimate their respective visions of the nation solidifies their point.²² However, current nationalist narra-

tives leave no space for such alternative imaginings of political community because they contradict definitions of the nation and its physical boundaries – an example of what Prasenjit Duara calls “the repressive connection between history and the nation.”²³ We can no more speak in the singular of nationalism than we can of colonialism or colonial modernity. We have to specify complex and overlapped relations among multiple layers of colonialism, competing versions of nationalism, *and* alternative narratives of political community.

We chose, therefore, to emphasize a more open approach to Korea’s modern history by writing away from the political narratives and within the overlapping paradigms of modernity and colonialism. Rather than simply destroy a naturalized Korean identity, as nationalist narratives most commonly assert, the merger of colonialism and modernity created a condition of ambiguity and contingency for existing identities. In particular, colonialism’s merger with modernity facilitated negotiation and modification of old identities and construction and reconstruction of new identities. Adapting Eugene Weber’s famous statement on the French, we might assert that colonialism transformed “peasants into Koreans.” The category, *Chōsenjin* (Koreans), thus created was a bureaucratic, essentializing, and derogatory classification applicable to all Koreans. Furthermore, colonial modernity’s effect was not uniform but highly uneven across diverse social groups and over different regions. The uneven spread of colonial modernity created a potential for constructing diverse and competing forms of identity within the complex field of cultural hegemony maintained under Japanese rule.

Current nationalist narratives, nonetheless, subsume all competing forms of identities under the category of the nation. In Chapter 7, Kenneth Wells provides a trenchant critique of how nationalism represses the consideration of other categories in its drive to enshrine a single, inherent identity of value. The nation becomes a whole in relation to the colonial Other and thus overrides alternative collective identities such as class, gender, region, and status. Accordingly, all social movements under colonial rule become nationalist and anti-colonial. Yet contributors to the volume warn against the danger of subsuming all other identities within the rubric of the nation. Kim’s chapter shows that colonial modernity not only brought the notion of human rights and social equity to Korea, but it also offered *paekchōng* the opportunity to engage in activism in order to gain social upward mobility. Henry Em (Chapter 12) and Clark Sorensen (Chapter 10) examine ambiguities and

tensions within the process of constructing the Korean nation or Koreanness. Em demonstrates how multiple meanings underlay the writings of Sin Ch'aeho; rather than fix the idea of the nation, Sin's seminal writings provide grist for widely varying political interpretations of the nation in postwar, divided Korea. Sorensen examines different conceptions of peasantry and its relationship to the idea of nation; understanding the malleability of this category sheds light on postwar efforts to recast the nation around the category of *minjung* (agrarian masses) in the 1980s. In short, the notion of the nation was not an immutable given, despite Korea's long history of maintaining a unified political community. It was contested, negotiated, reformulated, and reconstructed during the colonial period, and the process continues today in different form.

The exploration of gender is weakly represented in the narratives of twentieth-century Korea. Women's issues are treated in separate histories that are often divorced from the dynamic and changing context of their genesis. As Kenneth Wells points out in Chapter 7, the feminist issue of repression under Korean patriarchy was submerged and redirected as the larger, male-dominated nationalist movement mobilized women's groups for political purposes. Moreover, the imperatives of nationalist and social revolutionary politics further divided women's groups by marginalizing those focused exclusively on feminist social (non-national) issues. Like modernity or nationalism, gender is also a complex variable. Kyeong-Hee Choi tackles the issue of gender by examining the different experiences of women over time and between generations. The new possibilities for women in colonial Korea were not all political, and women of different generations responded variously. Choi examines Pak Wonso's autobiographical novel "Mother's Stake 1" to show how the private sphere of women was altered by colonial modernity. Social mobility strategies, educational opportunity, and new economic roles transformed family child-rearing practices in the colonial city. Women caught between their traditional upbringing and new avenues of mobility began to realize their own dreams in the guise of guiding their daughters into the world of the "new woman."

We are not suggesting a deconstruction in a post-structuralist vein of all essentialist notions of identity in order to simply capture "difference." Rather, we continue to recognize the utility of general categories such as nation, gender, and class as we attend to the historical and social processes that construct these identities. To understand a dynamic process such as identity formation, we must consider that identities

coexist, rise, and fall in significance depending on circumstances, context, and their relationship to large and/or small structures in society. In particular, it is important to pay close attention to the complex process in which tradition and modernity or indigenous and alien values interact to produce a particular form of identity in a historically given situation.

It is now well recognized that modernity does not necessarily efface tradition; tradition is often revitalized or even re-invented in reaction to modernity as another resource in identity formation. Nationalist intellectuals articulate the nation by drawing from the pool of culture and memory; ideologues working for the nation-state have the power to mobilize the resources of centralized educational systems and military training to socialize vast numbers of people into a re-invented tradition. The well-known work of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger and Liah Greenfeld's study on nationalism were influential in showing how this process works.²⁴ More recently, Takashi Fujitani's *Splendid Monarchy* has provided another example of the constructed nature of rituals used to encourage national identity formation; one wonders how the lessons learned by Japan's authors of "traditional" imperial pagentry influenced later constructions of colonial authority in Korea.²⁵ Under colonial rule, Koreans were also searching for indigenous sources from which to formulate or reformulate Korean national identity. Research on folklore, shamanism, and mythology that could reveal indigenous Korean roots or Koreanness constituted a key part of the Korean nationalist project during the period.²⁶ In this volume, Michael Shin's analysis of Korean intellectuals' embrace of *chǒng* or Sorensen's description of various constructions of peasantry as the basis of Korean nationalism are further illustrations of the process of appropriation and redeployment of tradition in identity formation. The *minjung* nationalism of the 1980s provides a contemporary example of the reappropriation of tradition in the service of identity formation.²⁷

That Koreans turned to tradition in their identity formation, however, should not prevent us from appreciating the equally important influence of the larger context of imperial political culture. As a number of scholars have pointed out, nationalists often include alien influences in their articulation of national identity even as they profess the national purity of their own sources. Greenfeld, for instance, points out that Germans could not but borrow the idea of the nation from France in their formulation of collectivist nationalism in response to the individualist French rationalism.²⁸ Partha Chatterjee goes further by indi-

cating the inherent contradiction faced by nationalists in accepting the logic and languages of the colonizers that they try to repudiate.²⁹ A number of chapters in the volume grapple differently with this issue by analyzing Korea's integration into the Japanese imperial system and its effects: technology transfer (Chapter 6, by Daqing Yang), the regional market (Chapter 5, by Soon Won Park), the culture industry (Chapter 2, by Michael Robinson), and regional colonial policy (Chapter 4, by Michael Schneider). Em's analysis of Sin Ch'aeho's nationalist oeuvre and Sorensen's discussion of the appropriation of peasantness as a source of Korean identity reveal how the metropolitan culture influenced the thinking of Korean intellectuals in their construction and reconstruction of new conceptions of nation, class, and gender. However, this should not be interpreted as suggesting that a mere "colonization of consciousness" occurred; instead, we must examine the complex ways in which indigenous and alien sources were intertwined to produce a historically distinctive form of identity. The chapters in this volume attempt to focus on such interactive processes in the formation of national, class, and gender identities.

What Is Ahead

This volume is the outcome of a collective effort to move beyond the current nationalist master narratives operative in both North and South Korea by focusing on the complex relations among colonialism, modernity, nationalism, and identity formation. Its primary goal is to stimulate the process of recognizing more inclusive, pluralist approaches to the historical record of twentieth-century Korea and deepen the insights of Korean and Western historians working on this period. Such an approach can counter both binary conceptions and essentialist readings of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism as they have been applied to Korea's recent experience. It will also encourage our understanding of the constructed and contingent characteristics of these important concepts. Moreover, the recovery of silenced voices and subjects of history held hostage by master nationalist narratives will provide the material for the construction of a more complex and nuanced picture of colonial society. We hope that this volume will be a step in a constructive direction and facilitate a richer and freer public discourse on many of the controversial issues imbedded in the memory of colonialism that have occupied the minds of Korean intellectuals into the post-war era.

The volume is divided into two parts. The first deals with the formation of colonial modernity in areas ranging from the legal system to the mass media to industrialization and their linkage to cultural hegemony in Korea. The authors avoid the value-laden use of modernity as historical progress by focusing on its ambiguous qualities in the context of colonial domination. They also explicitly place their discussion in a larger geographic context, whether it be imperial political culture, technology transfer, or the regional market. As a whole, the chapters in this part aspire to show how various aspects of modernity emerged in the colonial context and how they were mobilized by Japanese for colonial domination in Korea, with often unexpected results.

The second part examines the impact of colonial modernity on the formation of various forms of identity from nation to gender to class. The authors do not assume these categories of collective identity as "natural" but focus on how aspects of colonial modernity facilitated the process of their formation through negotiation, contestation, and redefinition. In doing so, they also refuse to subsume this diverse array of collective identities under the name "nation"; rather, they focus on the tensions and contradictions in the process of coming to terms with multiple identities in the colonial context. In addition, some of the authors in this part have chosen to examine closely the ways in which indigenous resources were selected and mobilized in constructing these modern forms of collective identity. Collectively, the twelve chapters in this volume seek to show the complexity and diversity of colonial modernity, hegemony, and identity formation so as to capture the rich history of Korea's cultural, social, and political evolution in the twentieth century.

PART I

Colonial Modernity and Hegemony